on a machine-readable medium. The code may then made available to users such as those located at user computer1-N, i.e., computers 40_1-40_N through service center **12** or by means of the machine-readable medium. If the software or graphical user interface is presented via the machine-readable medium, the computers 40_1-40_N may not necessarily be linked to the remote network for purposes of using the invention.

[0281] For present discussion purposes, a discussion of the viewing process through the service center **12** will be described in the following sections. In particular, after a user computer system **40** establishes two-way communications with the service center **12**, the user is invited to select use of the programs developed and stored at the service center **12**. In one embodiment, the user may be able to locate and identify streaming media using the graphical user interface of the invention, or to tune to one or more stations, or to download one or more programs as provided by the invention. Such downloading may occur either upon payment of a predetermined amount or upon signing on as a member of a program. The user may also be invited to make transactions such as purchasing of additional services or goods. In making payments or purchases, verification of the user's identity or credit may be provided via verification entity **60**.

EXEMPLARY IMPLEMENTATIONS

[0282] The Web portal of the invention allows listeners of live streaming audio (Internet Radio) to achieve the following objectives easily and quickly:

  [0283] Present a user interface that displays the thousands of available stations efficiently, but doesn't overwhelm the user with information.

  [0284] Quickly find Internet Radio Broadcasters ("stations") by genre.

  [0285] Identify stations broadcasting at a suitable bandwidth, i.e., fast enough to meet the user's minimum quality expectation, but not faster than their Internet connection will support.

  [0286] Suggest stations which might have "similar" programming to the stations they are listening to or that they might enjoy.

  [0287] Encompass all available broadcast technologies-WMA, MP3, Real Audio, QuickTime, and any future media.

  [0288] Remember a user's preferences, favorites, and history.

[0289] This document describes the portal's functional specification, including a description of its core features.

[0290] Web site

[0291] The website of the invention is accessed with a standard Web browser by entering a URL, e.g., www.Soniclsland.com or www.Soniclsle.com. In the following description and for the purposes of discussion, reference will be made to Soniclsland.com as an exemplary web site. It is understood that any other web site or corresponding URL may be used. In one embodiment, the website of the invention will be divided into different functional areas which can be selected via a "tabbed"

[0292] interface. The tabs are:

  [0293] MapTab

  [0294] Yellow Pages Tab

  [0295] World Tab

  [0296] Search Tab

  [0297] Preferences Tab

[0298] The first four tabs represent different "views" into the world of Internet Radio Stations. These tabs will have common interfaces on the left hand side (the Information Bar) and the top (the Station Data). The layout can be see graphically in **FIG. 28**. In addition, one example of the graphical user interface of **FIG. 28** is shown in **FIG. 29**.

[0299] Map Tab

[0300] The Map Tab shows available stations using a unique graphical "map." This map will feature a mythical group of islands, continents, and seas, each with a set of radio towers representing available broadcasters.

[0301] Each region on the map will be labeled to represent a different genre, with broadcasters' radio towers located within the appropriate genre. Subsets of a genre will be represented by logical sub-regions. For example, one massive island will be called "Talk Land," and represent talk radio stations. One portion of the island will be dedicated to sports talk, another will focus on Christian talk, and so on.

[0302] The map will be displayed with rolling hills, water, forests, deserts, and other terrain. Stations will be displayed as icons. The display will be dynamic and will reflect what is happening at the moment. The stations icons' appearance will change based on advertised bandwidth, whether the stations are currently broadcasting, whether they are fall, whether they are marked as "favorites", and other criteria. The user can zoom-in and zoom-out, scroll to other portions of the map, click on a station icon to find out more information about the station, and other functions. The display will be "live" in that information displayed for the station will change dynamically as the station's status changes. For example, if a station becomes "full", the icon will change immediately to reflect the new status.

[0303] The navigation interface for the map will be a Navigation Bar (see **FIG. 30**) attached to the right-hand side of the map. It consists of arrows to allow the users to scroll the map in any direction, zoom controls to change the level of magnification (3 or 4 levels), and map size controls (for the user to change the size of the displayed map).

[0304] At minimum magnification, the whole virtual world will be displayed with only the high-level genres and only a few stations visible. As the user zooms in, more sub-genres will appear with more stations visible.

[0305] When the user clicks on a station icon, the icon will be highlighted and the station's information will be displayed in the Station Data.

[0306] Yellow Pages Tab

[0307] The Yellow Pages tab will display the radio stations in a hierarchical format organized by genre. Like Yahoo!'s interface, the user will be able to "drill down" to the genres in which they are interested. Each station's listing will contain the name of station, URL, bandwidth, currently